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Learning English for a Life of Choice in New Zealand

A Case Study of Afghan Women Refugees' Bilingual Class Experiences in Palmerston North

A research project presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of International Development

Development Studies

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Erika Soraya Hermawan

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the experiences of a group of women refugees learning English as part of their resettlement in New Zealand. The women's husbands were working as interpreters for the New Zealand Police in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. To ensure their safety after the New Zealand Police were withdrawn, these Afghan families were invited to resettle in Palmerston North, New Zealand. To attain in-depth results, this research report focuses on the women's efforts to integrate within the social life of New Zealand and their experiences in acquiring English as a tool to their successful resettlement program.

A small study was conducted in the context of an English Language Partners' (ELP) Bilingual English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL)-Literacy class for refugees. Participants for this research were five Afghan women, two ELP's ESOL teachers, and one of the women's husbands. The methods used were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observation, and curriculum analysis.

This report is framed within adult pre-literacy education and investigates whether women refugees become empowered through taking literacy classes. Findings show that there are links between language acquisition within the refugees' resettlement process and personal empowerment.

Afghan women's acquisition of English language skills has brought more personal control over their mobility and has changed relationships with their husbands to some extent since moving to New Zealand. Furthermore, the woman's learning experiences have brought them to a level where they can move on from ELP to a higher English level class.

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GLOSSARY

ELP	English Language Partners
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Language
ETC	English Teaching College
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
L1	Language 1 / the First Language
<i>MS Tampa</i>	United States of America's cargo ship
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NZPRT	the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team
PNCC	Palmerston North City Council
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America

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